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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the sixth periodic report of Sierra Leone

Addendum

Replies of Sierra Leone*

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework

1. **The report refers to "grey areas [...] that still aggravate discrimination against women" and mentions that "key among this is the need to expunge section 27(4) (d) from the Constitution of the country." As recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5, para. 13), please update the Committee on concrete action taken by the State party since 2008, after the report of the Constitutional Review Commission recommending the full repeal of section 27(4)(d) of the Constitution was presented to the President. Since section 27 can only be amended by way of referendum, please describe the steps envisaged by the State party to give full effect to the recommendations of the Constitutional Review Commission. Is there a time frame for the organization of such referendum? Please inform the Committee on the status of the Gender Equality Bill (para. 16)[1] and of the draft Criminal Procedure Act. Please also describe the content and status of the envisaged amendments to the Registration of Customary Marriage Act and to the Child Rights Act. Please provide updated information on the implementation of the National Strategic Roll-out Plan for the Implementation of the three gender Acts launched on 25 October 2008 (para. 13), including the challenges faced, and indicate if any monitoring mechanisms have been established to determine its main achievements.**

Section 27(4)(d) of the 1991 Constitution

As reported in the First to Fifth Periodic report of Sierra Leone a Constitutional Review Commission was appointed by former President, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in January 2007 headed by Dr. Peter Tucker, the then Chairman of The Law Reform Commission to "review the Sierra Leone Constitution of 1991 with a view to recommending amendments that might bring it up to date with economic, social and political developments that have taken place nationally and internationally since 1991" (see Government Notice No. 6 Vol. CXXXVIII of The Sierra Leone Gazette No. 2 of Thursday, 11th January, 2007).

The said Constitutional Review Commission recommended, inter alia, the complete repeal of Section 27(4)(d) from the Constitution. The Commission presented its report to the current president, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma in 2008.

Instead of considering the report of the Commission set up by his predecessor, the current President, in his wisdom, has appointed another Constitutional Review Commission in April, 2013 to start the entire process all over again. A broad-based Constitutional Review Committee with members drawn from all facets of Society was inaugurated by the President on the 30th July 2013 under the Chairmanship of a retired Judge of the Superior Courts of Judicature and a former Speaker of Parliament. This Committee has commenced sittings after the adoption of detailed terms of reference, work methodology and rules of procedure as well as a schedule of activities. The recommendations contained in the Report of the Peter Tucker Constitutional Review Commission (referred to above) which was submitted to the Government in January 2008 will serve as a starting point to the Committee's work and it is expected that this process will span a period of 24 months. This process

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph numbers refer to the sixth periodic report of the State party (CEDAW/C/SLE/6).

will culminate in a Referendum and so it is expected that the Referendum will take place approximately 24 months from now.

The review process is scheduled to last from April, 2013 to end of March, 2015. As part of its strategies, the new Constitutional Review Commission plans to work closely with civil society groups and Non-Governmental Organizations including UN Agencies and other women's Organization to ensure that women's voices are heard on gender equality issues relevant to the Constitutional review.

It is hoped that Section 27(4) (d) would be brought into focus and accordingly amended. The current Constitutional Review Commission plans to use the report of the last Constitutional Review Commission as the basis of its work.

The Gender Equality Bill, 2011

The Gender Equality Bill, 2011 is still a Bill i.e. it has not been enacted into law. In the course of the campaign for the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in 2011, the current president, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma promised the women that a Gender Equality Act would be passed to give the women a minimum 30 per cent quota for Parliamentary Seats and executive appointments.

The President however advised the women Civil Society Organizations to cause the Bill to be brought to Parliament through a Private Member's (not Government) Bill, as accordingly to the President, such private member's Bill would be easier to enact than a Government Bill which takes longer.

Accordingly, the UN Agencies provided technical and financial support and a Gender Equality Bill was drafted.

The contents of the Bill however turned out to be inconsistent with certain provisions of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 including Section 56(1) of the Constitution which gives the President the authority to appoint Ministers and Deputy Ministers in his discretion.

Accordingly, there was need for some provisions of the 1991 Constitution to be amended so as to make them consistent with the provisions of The Gender Equality Bill.

Incidentally, there is now a Constitutional Review Commission which has commenced its work and it is hoped that Women's Civil Society Organizations would push for the said amendments after which the Gender Equality Bill may be tabled for debate ad enactment by Parliament.

The Draft Criminal Procure Bill, 2013

This Bill has been approved by Cabinet and has been reviewed by the Law Officers' Department following the comments by Cabinet. The reviewed Bill has been forwarded to the Government Printer who has printed the final draft. This final draft is been vetted after which the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice would cause it to be tabled before Parliament for debate and enactment. However, there is no time line for the enactment of this Bill into law. It is hoped that it might be this year or early next year, 2014.

Registration of Customary Marriage Act

There are no agreed proposals yet for the amendments of these two Acts.

If anything, the challenges related to the legal provisions in the Acts are only being noted for discussions and proposals for amendments.

Access to Justice

2. **Please provide information on the achievements of the Justice Sector reform Strategy (2008-2010), in particular measures taken to enhance women's effective access to justice, especially for vulnerable groups of women, such as illiterate women and rural women, including through awareness-raising and outreach campaigns. Given that local courts, which are part of the State party's judicial system, administer customary law in the chiefdoms, please indicate which measures have been taken to establish oversight mechanisms, other than the right to appeal to the district court, in order to ensure that women are not discriminated against in the delivery of justice. In this regard, has the State party undertaken capacity-building activities, training on new legislation and awareness-raising on women's rights in the local courts? Further, given that existing legal aid services for women are mainly channelled through civil society organizations, please indicate if measures have been taken to establish a legal aid system pursuant to the enactment of the Legal Aid Law in 2012.**

The Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan (JSRSIP) (2008-2010) was revised and the Government is currently operating under the new JSRSIP II (2011-2014) which was approved by Cabinet in July 2014. This new strategy continues to pay a premium on access to justice for the most vulnerable with its three outcomes being:

- ✓ Justice is easily accessible
- ✓ Justice is expected
- ✓ Rights and Accountability are respected

The Legal Aid Act was passed in 2012 and this Act does provide a legal platform for the provision of paralegal services by non-state actors at community level. All Members that should comprise the Legal Aid Board have been nominated and await appoint by His Excellency the President before they can take up office and establish the Legal Aid Secretariat.

Oversight mechanisms for the Local Courts

The Local Courts Act. 1963 Act No. 20 of 1963 has been repealed and replaced by The Local Courts Act, 2011. A major change effected by this 2011 Act is that the Local Courts have now been brought from The Ministry of Local Government to the mainstream Judiciary as headed by the Chief Justice.

It is now the Chief Justice who appoints all the personnel of the Local Courts after consultation with the Judicial and Legal Service Commission which is the Commission responsible for the appointment of all judicial and other legal service staff.

The new Act provides for the establishment of three (3) Local Courts Service Committees one for each of the three Provinces where the Local Courts sit and operate.

These Committees have oversight functions over the Local Courts as each Committee advises the Judicial and Legal Service Commission on the appointments, transfers, promotions and dismissals of the officers and servants of the Local Courts.

It means therefore that the Committees initiate the appointment process and also receives, investigates and makes recommendation on any alleged misconduct of a Local Court officer or servant.

Each Committee is chaired by the resident High Court Judge of the province. By this change, the Local Court has been made to operate much more independently without political or administrative interference from Politicians or Paramount Chiefs.

Government passed the New Local Courts Act in 2011 which brought the Local Courts under the direct purview of the Chief Justice with the aim of the further strengthening of the rule of law, improving access to justice and removing political influence from the Courts. An extensive implementation plan for the role out of the new Courts has been developed which includes the orientation of the Local Courts service committees and extensive training of all stakeholders in terms of access to justice issues especially for women and children, records management, human rights etc.

However, the members of the Local Courts Service Committee have not been appointed yet due to lack of funds to operate the said Committees.

The Accounts Unit of The Judiciary has made budget proposal for same and the salaries and allowances of the officers and servants of The Local Court in the 2014 national annual budget. Also the office of The Chief Justice has identified the other members of each of the three Committees for appointment by the President of Sierra Leone and upon their appointment, they would be trained and directed to commence work i.e. initiating the employment of new local courts personnel who would be trained on the nature and rules of adjudication.

It is hoped that these processes would be completed by the first quarter of next year, 2014 and the new crop of Local Courts personnel would commence work by the beginning of second quarter i.e. April, 2014.

National machinery for the advancement of women

3. **Given the chronic understaffing of the Gender Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and its lack of budget, please provide updated information on the human and financial resources allocated to it and to its newly established statistical unit, as well as to the regional gender desk offices (para. 33). Please elaborate on the capacity of the Gender Directorate to coordinate with the different relevant ministries and with its decentralised offices, in particular with regard to the effective implementation of the National Gender Strategic Plan (2010-2013). Since the report indicates that "twin" policies developed in 2000 (National Gender Mainstreaming Policy and National Policy on the Advancement of Women) were not reviewed, please elaborate on the measures put in place to ensure gender mainstreaming (para. 38) and indicate whether a monitoring**

mechanism of the implementation of the National Gender Strategic Plan was established as well as how its evaluation will be ensured.

The Government of Sierra Leone has taken proactive measures in strengthening the capacity of the Gender Directorate of the Ministry through the recruitment of staff. The Public Service Commission which has the Constitutional mandate for the recruitment of government officials for the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies has put out an advertisement to recruit several core staff of the Ministry both at Headquarters and the provinces. It is hoped that these staff when recruited will provide the necessary human and technical support for the furtherance of gender issues across the country.

On the allocation to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, the government is making some steady progress by increasing the amount allotted to the social services and gender programmes. This commitment is also translated into the recently launched Agenda for Prosperity which is serving as the blue print for the implementation of government development's effort between 2013-2018. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was accorded a whole pillar whilst mainstreaming gender in the remaining pillars. Apart from the government budgetary allocation to the Ministry, the Development Partners have greater confidence in the Ministry by providing direct support to the Ministry for the implementation of gender programmes.

The 2002 Statistics Act clearly spells out that data collected should gender disaggregated. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs has good working relationship with Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) and we do collaborate with SSL whenever they undertaking major surveys and censuses by way of ensuring that gender is mainstreamed. SSL has assigned a female statistician to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and the Ministry in turn provided her with an office space and she is doing well.

The Ministry employed the services of interns who have graduated from Universities to support the full time employed staff of the Gender Directorate for the implementation of the National Gender Strategic Plan (2010-2013). A midterm review of the National Gender Strategic Plan has been undertaken to ascertain the level of progress of implementation and most of the indicators suggested that the government was on track. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs has offices in the regions and Districts which suggest that we collaborate with the decentralized structure for effective service delivery. In fact as part of the devolution process, the Ministry has devolved functions, resources and personnel to the Local Councils whilst the Ministry retains policy and legal reforms, coordination and monitoring of the devolved functions.

Government of Sierra Leone through the Agenda for Prosperity has initiated reforms for the policies and legislations. The "twin policies" namely National Policy on the Advancement of Women and the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming will be updated and collapsed into one National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy. The Consultancy has been advertised and the would-be National Consultant will commence the consultations and writing of the policy before the end of the year.

Temporary special measures

4. **Please update the Committee on the status of the pending Affirmative Action Bill. What priority is being accorded to its adoption, especially in light of the public statement of the President on 8 March 2011 supporting the minimum quota of 30 per cent female representation at all levels of governance. Please indicate whether other temporary special measures are envisaged to accelerate de facto equality between women and men in other areas of the Convention, including education and employment, and to address the multiple discrimination faced by different disadvantaged groups of women, including rural women, refugee women, women with disabilities, widows and women affected by the war. Please also indicate if the State party has taken any steps in order to establish a legislative basis for the use of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4 paragraph 1 of the Convention, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5, para. 19).**

The government of Sierra Leone is gender responsive which is why in the absence of a legislature on the minimum 30 per cent, the Government of His Excellency the President has made appointments of women in key decision making positions of governance. However, government of Sierra Leone is committed to the legislation of robust Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill expected to go beyond the minimum 30 per cent quota representation of women in governance at all levels. Government had given women the leverage to develop and table a Bill for legislation through a private member motion by the Sierra Leone Female Parliamentary Caucus. The Bill was drafted but was marred by issues not related to government political will and commitment.

The government in furtherance of its commitment to moving this process forward has decided to make it a government Bill instead of the private member motion which never darkened the wall of Parliament. The Ministry has sought concurrence from the Attorney General and Minister of Justice for the development of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy which will inform the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill. As stated inter alia, the policy and the Bill will now include political governance, administrative, governance, economic governance, energy, violence against women, education and training, agriculture, labour and employment, access to justice among others.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

As recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5, para. 21), please provide information on concrete measures taken by the State party, including through collaboration with traditional and community leaders and women's organizations, to change the public attitude and social and cultural patterns that lead to gender stereotyping in relation to the roles of women and men in the family, the community and the society at large.

6. **Please provide information on the enforcement of existing provisions in the Child Rights Act prohibiting and criminalizing early and forced marriages and describe the measures taken to ensure that such marriages are not registered. Further, regarding the practice of female genital mutilation, which remains widespread in the State party, as acknowledged by the State party**

(para. 43), although some Chiefdoms have locally legislated against female genital mutilation, the Committee notes that there is no explicit provision prohibiting such practice in the Child Rights Act (para. 48). Please indicate if the State party envisages amending the Child Rights Act to include a specific prohibition in this regard, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5, para. 23). Please also elaborate on the Memoranda of Understanding concluded between Paramount Chiefs and Initiators (Sowei's), as referred to in paragraph 48 and provide information on the outcome of the nationwide consultation conducted with the Sowei's, on the progress in establishing a Sowei's Council and on concrete actions envisaged with the Council to eliminate female genital mutilation. Besides the sensitization and awareness-raising engagement with traditional leaders and initiators (para. 47), please also indicate which educational measures and awareness-raising campaigns have been undertaken to combat this phenomenon.

The Child Rights Act 2007 made the following provisions:

Section 33(1) is focused on the protection from torture and degrading treatment. It states that "no person shall subject a child to torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment including any cultural practice which dehumanizes or is injurious to physical and mental welfare of a child.

Section 34 is focused on the minimum age of marriage and refuse betrothal or marriage. Section 33(1) sets the minimum age of marriage of whatever kind shall be eighteen years.

Section 34(2) states that no person shall force a child (a) to be betrothed; (b) to be subject of a dowry transaction; (c) to be married.

Section 34(3) Not withstanding any law to the contrary, no certificate license or registration shall be granted in respect of any marriage unless the registrar or other responsible officer is satisfied that the parties to the marriage are of age of maturity.

Section 35 Any person who contravenes a provision of this part commits an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 30 million leones or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Section 46 focuses on customary practices prohibited for child. Section 46(1) subject to subsection (1) of section 34, no person or association shall subject a child to any of the following practices: (a) early marriage (b) child betrothal.

Section 46(2) Any person or association that coerces a child to participate in any of the practices specified in sub-section (1) shall be guilty of an offence punishable by a fine of not less than 500,000 leones to or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Additionally, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and its partners have taken measures to address this unwholesome state of affair:

Child Welfare Committees have been established at chiefdom, district and regional levels to sensitize the communities about disadvantages of forced and early marriages including other harmful traditional practices in their communities. Child

focused organizations mostly civil society organizations have established Child Rights Coalition (CRC) working in close collaboration with the district, regional and national protection committees to undertake awareness raising campaigns on child protection issues.

Massive sensitization and awareness raising is ongoing throughout the country to completely eradicate child marriage and child betrothal.

The government of Sierra Leone under the leadership of the His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma has developed and officially launched the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy in Sierra Leone (2013-2015).

After the signing of MOUs as an entry point, communities are engaged using the Generation dialogue tool which is an action research tools to find out communities' views on total abandonment of FGM. This tool empowers communities to learn more about the harmful effect of FGM which gives them an opportunity to make informed decisions about the practice. Some of the agreed deliverables in the MoU include:

- Ensure that no girl that is below the age of eighteen years is initiated into the Bondo society and prevent the infliction of FGM on such girls and make and implement byelaws and other strategies to achieve this goal.
- Ensure that Sowies forming part of the FSU in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs will cooperate in the investigation of all Child Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) related cases.
- Ensure that City Council, Community Heads, FSU and Ministries (MSWGCA and MOHS) staff receives appropriate joint training. This may include in-house and out of station training provided by AMNet and pertinent stakeholders.
- Share information with AMNet, FSU, MOHS and MSWGCA concerning relevant information gathered on CHILD Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other child abuses.
- Share information regularly on this agreement and monthly findings at local level.

The Government also has shown commitment to address FGM by having as a strategy to enact laws against underage initiation in the pillar 8 of the Agenda for Prosperity.

Violence against women

7. **Information available to the Committee refers to the recent adoption of the Sexual Offences Act. Please indicate if mechanisms have been put in place to ensure the effective enforcement of new provisions relating to (1) victims and witnesses' protection, (2) victim's entitlement to free medical treatment and a free medical report and (3) victim's right to be compensated during the criminal proceedings. Please inform the Committee on the status of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (para. 81) and indicate if measures have been included to support the implementation of the new legislation, including through capacity-building and awareness-raising programmes on its content for all relevant professional groups, such as the**

police, lawyers, the judiciary, health and social workers, as well as the public at large. Please provide updated and detailed data on the number of cases reported and investigated by the Family Support Units, as well as on the number of convictions. Please also provide information on the work, functioning and activities of the special Saturday Courts which hear only cases relating to sexual and gender-based violence.

Victim and witnesses' Protection

A strategy for the protection of witnesses including victim includes the Saturday Courts for Sexual and or Gender-based Violence matters. On Saturdays, which is a weekend day, not normal weekday), there are less members of the public and are not teeming as on weekdays. Most times, it is just the Accused, victim, their relations and Court Officials who are allowed in the court and when the victim of a sexual assault is testifying, all other members of the public are asked out of the court.

Medical Examination and Treatment of Victims for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Offences

Victims are entitled to free medical examination, treatment and report. The hospital where these examinations and treatment occurred are funded by development partners like International Rescue Committee. So the personnel do not charge the victim and/ their relations to pay for the services including the examination, treatment and medical reports.

Cases Investigated by the Family Support Unit and Number of Convictions

Following the passage of the Sexual Offences Act, 2012 which came into force on the 1st day of November, 2012, the Family Support Unit (F.S.U) of the Sierra Leone Police has investigated about 6,805 matters nationwide from January-September, 2013. Out of this number, 1.040 were charged to the Magistrate Court for Preliminary Investigations and 363 were committed to the High Court for trial.

In order to assist the F.S.U. in its work, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has commenced a policy since April, 2011 to vet all sexual and gender-based violence offences files to determine which has sufficient evidence to warrant it to be charged to court and which one need to be re-investigated or kept in view. This is been done in the Western Area as a Pilot Project.

From January to August 2013, the Family Support Unit in the Western Area forwarded a total of 586 case and enquiry files to the office of the DPP. The monthly distribution and nature of advice are shown in the table below.

No	Month	To Charge	To keep in view	To Re-open investigations	To close file	To refer civil	To settle	Total
1	January	14	1	0	1	0	7	23
2	February	33	5	4	17	1	31	91
3	March	29	5	1	4	0	18	57
4	April	18	3	2	9	0	18	57
5	May	60	2	1	13	0	33	109
6	June	24	0	2	9	4	23	62
7	July	60	2	2	18	2	41	125
8	August	31	4	3	3	2	18	61
	Total	**269**	**22**	**15**	**74**	**9**	**197**	**586**

Out of those matters charged to court these are the number of convictions.

No	Months	Convictions	Discharge	Acquitted & discharged
1	January	1	–	–
2	February	–	–	2
3	March	1	–	–
4	April	–	–	–
5	May	2	–	–
6	June	2	–	–
7	July	1	3	–
8	August	–	4	–
9	September	1	3	–

Some districts for instance Bo have included funds for the free medical examination and treatment into the budget for 2014.

Pressure from Civil Society has resulted in free medical examination and treatment in Kambia since June 2013.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs in collaboration with Advocacy Movement Network (AMNet) did trainings on the Sexual Offences Act in Bonthe, Bo, Kenema and Freetown for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community Leaders, Local Council Officials, Staff of the Family Support Unit, the Media and Stakeholders of the education and health system — media reports about it followed.

AMNet has provided trainings on the National Referral Protocol on GBV in Kambia, Bonthe, Bo, Kenema and Freetown and facilitated the establishment of the coordination structures as described in the National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence.

The Saturday Courts continue to sit regularly with support from UNDP. In addition, the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Law Officers Department, Office of the Attorney-General and Ministry of Justice has placed a lot of emphasis on

support to the Sierra Leone Police in its investigating and prosecution sexual and gender based crimes in terms of support to investigators and police prosecutors and the provision of legal advice before cases are charged to Court.

Violence against Women

7. **Please provide updated information on the number of protection orders issued under the Domestic Violence Act. Regarding the out of court settlement provided by article 20 of the Domestic Violence Act, please clarify which "alternative dispute resolution mechanisms" are available to women in case of referral and indicate how many cases have been referred to such mechanisms. Please provide detailed information on the activities undertaken by the National Centre for the Prosecution of Violence against Women established by the Sierra Leone Bar Association mandated to investigate and prosecute gender-based violence and domestic abuse (para. 73). Please inform the Committee on the functioning of the National Referral Protocol for Child Victims/Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and indicate if the Referral Pathway referred to in paragraph 56 has been completed.**

There is limited information on the number of protection orders issued by the court. Domestic Violence cases are criminal matters and therefore can be handled by the formal justice system. Most of the cases of domestic violence have either been concluded in the court through conviction of the perpetuators and some of them thrown out of court for lack of evidence. In the case of the out of court settlement, the Act is very clear that it only happens when the act itself does not have heavily body harm to the victim or survivor. These 'alternative dispute resolutions mechanisms' are mostly referred to the Family Case Work section of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs.

National Centre for the Prosecution of Violence against Women established by the Sierra Leone Bar Association.

The National Referral Protocol for victims of gender-based violence including the referral pathway was officially launched alongside the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence in October 2012 for full implementation. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and its partners have started the roll-out of the two documents nationwide through community meetings and trainings.

Women in post-conflict situations

9. **Please provide updated information on concrete measures taken by the State party to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the rehabilitation and social reintegration of women and girls victims of the war. To what extent does the Reparation Programme established in 2008 address the socio-economic needs of women victims and is sustainable and tailored to the economic context? Has the State party established any reparations fund to support reparations for victims of sexual violence? Please provide information on concrete measures taken by the State party to ensure women victims' access to medical care and psychological counseling, particularly in rural areas? Please also provide information on measures undertaken by the State party to address the stigmatization of victims, which often generates re-victimization in the aftermath of sexual violence and a second wave of harm, as a result of rejection by husbands and communities?**

Sierra Leone witnessed a wide range of human rights violations amongst which included sexual violence during the civil war. Pursuant to fulfilling part of the requirements of the Lome Peace Agreement of July 1999, Articles XXVI and XXIX, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommended reparations to five categories of victim vis-à-vis Amputees, War Wounded, War Widows, Orphans and Survivors of Sexual Violence.

The Government of Sierra Leone designated the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) as the government institution to implement reparations with established infrastructure in all districts in Sierra Leone. NaCSA, in collaboration with civil society groups including women organizations, CBOs, LNGOs and government line ministries embarked on the implementation of the programme utilizing sound participatory approaches. Between December 2008 and July 2009, NaCSA registered a total caseload of 33,863 claimants and developed a database upholding profiles of all of the registered caseload. Based on the five categories and total number registered, over 60 per cent is women.

Since the establishment of the Sierra Leone Reparations Programme in 2008, very modest forms of reparations for victims started in 2009 with the United Nations Peace building Fund (PBF) seed money US $3m and Government of Sierra Leone counterpart funding to kick start the programme. With that funding, women were provided with interim cash grants of US $80 each to engage on some income generation activities to start to rebuild their lives and restore their dignity. Additionally, about 235 women went through fistula surgery and gynaecological operations and most of the registered cases in 40 chiefdoms benefited from symbolic reparations. Furthermore, 204 women received US $1,400 in 2013 in place of pension, education, health, transportation etc; 355 women have received shelter support and over 8,500 women received psychosocial counselling services since 2009. To ensure further support from individuals and institutions in Sierra Leone, HE the President launched the War Victims Trust Fund on 5th November 2009 to provide the basis for Sierra Leoneans to contribute to the fund and promote sustainability of the programme.

Within the context of continuing implementing the recommendations of the TRC for the rehabilitation and social reintegration of women and girls victims of the war in Sierra Leone, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (EVAW) managed by UN Women further approved US $999,999 complemented by Government counterpart funding to support the skills training of victims of sexual violence under the reparations programme. The skills training ranged from three to six months effective April 2010 to March 2012 in the form of specific and targeted vocational skills trainings and core components coupled with micro grants for livelihood generation. Among other things the beneficiaries were provided with a package including subsistence allowance of US $35, training materials US$ 120, Equipment US $100, toolkit US $100 during training period whilst Trainers were supported with trainer fee of US $145 for each constituting US$ 500 per beneficiary. At the end of the training in March 2011 for the first batch and February 2012 for the second, grandiose certification ceremonies were conducted in each regional headquarter town during which certificates, tool kits and micro grant worth US $500 were provided to each of the 650 beneficiaries that graduated. The micro grant was paid in their various bank accounts through the Rokel Commercial Bank in Freetown. Thus each VSV benefited on average US$ 1,000.

The outcomes of these projects have made and will continue to make spectacular impact in restoring the dignity of the women affected by the war in diverse ways. In the first instance, provision of interim cash grants and subsequently engaging these women in capacity building exercises and providing them with tool kits and micro grants as start-up capital has not only restored guaranteed hope and success in rebuilding their lives but has also created a favourable environment for them to build confidence, courage and determination to forge ahead in sustaining their lives. Thus the potentials of these women could once again be exploited through established sustainable earning opportunities, increased income, self sufficiency and support to the Government in acknowledging and providing a remedy to the sufferings of women war victims in Sierra Leone.

In conclusion, despite these forms of support provided through the intervention of the UN in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone, the major constraint of the Sierra Leone Reparations Programme has been inadequate funding to provide reparations to the registered victims as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Government of Sierra Leone prior to the enactment of the Sexual Act has done extensive programmes on the TRC recommendations.

10. **The report refers to the Sierra Leone National Action Plan for the full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (SiLNAP), which includes elements of UN Security Council Resolution 1820. Please describe concrete measures taken to enhance women's participation in all peace-building and reconstruction efforts and indicate whether adequate budget is allocated for the implementation of the SiLNAP. Provide information on whether baseline data related to the implementation of UNSCR 1325, including data on gender-based violence and women's participation in peace building and reconstruction processes, is being collected and disseminated by the State party. Please also indicate if women's organizations have been engaged in the security sector reform process.**

As in most wars, women in Sierra Leone bore the brunt of the civil war. The UNSCR 1325 (2000) was unanimously adopted by member states in October 2000. The end to the civil war was negotiated in Lome, Togo before then in July 1999 and the war was officially declared over in January 2002 after the signing of the Peace Agreement referred to as the 'Lome Peace Accord'. Women were an integral part of the Peace Negotiating Team in Lome from the 25th of May to the 7th of July in 1999. Although the documented evidence regarding the number of males and females on the delegations were not readily available, stories recounted by the representative of the CSO Women's Forum on the Observer team, indicate that women comprised about 37-40 per cent of all persons who participated in the negotiation process.

Since the restoration of peace in Sierra Leone all stakeholders have joined in the recovery and peace building efforts, especially with the active support of development partners as evidenced in the compact with the UN Peace Building Commission (PBC). Various initiatives/programmes were established and funded under the Peace Building Fund (PBF) to ensure that the hard-won peace is nurtured and maintained, and that Sierra Leone would not relapse into war. Even where there have been hot spots of political violence that posed threats to the safety and security of persons, especially women and girls serious responses were made to diffuse and

prevent conflicts through relevant strategies/actions including dialogue, mediation and reconciliation. A number of representatives of women's organizations like MARWOPNET, Women's Forum and Gender Empowerment Movement have being trained by ECOWAS and UNOWA on negotiation and mediation techniques. In some instances and prior to the 2012 National elections, civil society organizations including these women's organizations have worked together with male-led/mixed gender CSOs on peace consolidation projects within the framework of the Civil Society Platform for Non-Violence set up with funding from UNIPSL. Among such groups are HOPE Sierra Leone that is an organization campaigning for peace, which go into communities to mediate conflict. Another organization, Fambul Tok has also trained community women referred to as Peace Mothers to mediate peace in their communities.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

11. **Please indicate whether the State party has established procedures for victim identification and mechanisms for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of trafficking offenders under the existing legislative framework, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5, 2007, para. 29). Please also inform the Committee on the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties imposed on the perpetrators of such crimes. Please indicate if the State party has taken steps to provide training to the judiciary and to law enforcement officials on the Human Trafficking Act and if it envisages developing a comprehensive national strategy to combat trafficking in women and girls. Please describe concrete activities undertaken by the National Task Force on Human Trafficking (para. 89) and the anti-trafficking school clubs (para. 93).**

12. **In light of the prevalence of prostitution of women and girls in the State party, particularly among female war victims, please describe the measures taken to provide educational and economic alternatives to prostitution, to introduce exit and rehabilitation programmes for women and girls who wish to leave prostitution, as well as to discourage the demand for prostitution.**

In 2011 trafficking in persons report that was released by the United States Department of States in June 2012, Sierra Leone came down to Tier-2 Watch list on the world-wide tier ranking. Then for the 2012 report which was released in June this year, the country again went up to Tier-2. According to the State Department's annual trafficking in persons report, a country is assessed as Tier-1, Tier-2 or Tier 3 based on how that country is complying with the "minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking". The Tier-2 ranking is for countries that are making focused and concerted efforts in the fight against this modern-day slavery.

Policy measures

Since the last trafficking in persons report in June 2012, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs has spearheaded a number of policy measures to combat human trafficking and related issues in the country:

- Parliament passed the Sexual Offences Act in August 2012 which increases criminal penalties for sexual offences including sex trafficking.

- The inter-ministerial Committee on Trafficking in Persons, which was established by the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2005, met on June 27, 2013 for the first time in eight years. The meeting provided an opportunity to begin coordinating anti-human trafficking activities at the highest level to enable Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to work together against traffickers. It was also meant to bolster the efforts of the National Taskforce on Human Trafficking, as well as give us give our front-line officials such as social workers, the police, immigration officers and judges the support they need to protect trafficking victims, including those women and girls that are sexually exploited, and then where possible punish the traffickers.

- An Anti-Trafficking Sub-Committee on Migrant Workers was set up in August this year. The Sub- Committee is chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security with other representatives from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Sierra Leone Police and Immigration Department. Their responsibility is to monitor indicators or evidences of trafficking during and after the process of recruiting persons, many of women are young women recruited as house maids, in Sierra Leone to work abroad, as well as during periods covering the contracts of foreigners recruited from abroad to work in industries or service-based businesses in the country.

The Committee has already commenced their work by developing an information brochure to educate migrant workers of their rights and facilitate the reporting of labour and sexual exploitations they may face at the workplace.

- On October 31, 2013 the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs dispatched a memorandum to the Cabinet Secretariat seeking Cabinet approval on the ratification on the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (also known as the Palermo Protocol). This Protocol supplements the UN Convention against Organized Crime. Cabinet approval will pave a way for Parliament to ratify the Convention and the Protocol thereto.

- Importantly also, ratification will broaden existing opportunities to work more effectively with the international community in the fight against human trafficking including enforcement of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act and National Policy on the Protection and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking and Related issues in Sierra Leone, which is also before Cabinet for approval.

Public Awareness and Victim Identification

- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and partners, in December last year, launched a "scaling up awareness in trafficking (SAT) initiative". The initiative was designed to build on the training and public awareness campaigns that had been carried out over the years. It aimed to raise awareness among Sierra Leone's population about the dangers of human trafficking and ways to prevent it. SMS Text messages and radio/TV shows were mainly used to reach out to the public.

- In addition, a hotline on trafficking labelled "FREEDOMLINE" is soon to be launched for members of the public to make emergency calls and report incidents of human trafficking and related issues in their area. This hotline will

be provided so that the public can help the police and social workers to rescue Sierra Leonean and non Sierra Leonean men, women and children suspected to be in such exploitative conditions as forced labour, slavery, servitude, sex trafficking, debt bondage and illicit removal of organs.

Meanwhile, the national trafficking task force has also developed a step down training plan for implementation, which focuses on simple and clear messages on how to proactively identify and rescue a trafficking victim. The training is for social workers providing victims with protective services, immigration officers in contact with unaccompanied minors, labour inspectors in contact with undocumented migrant and law enforcement officers who, in the course of their daily duties, come in contact with women and girls in prostitution.

Victim

No.	*Type of exploitation*	*Age*	*Sex*
1	Attempted sale	14	F
2	TIP/Commercial Sexual Exploitation	12	F
3	Sexual Exploitation	14	F
4	Attempted sale	9	F
5	Nine counts charges including trafficking & exploitation	11	F
6	Commercial sex exploitation	16	F
7	Sexual exploitation and abuse of young girl	15	F
8	Sexual exploitation	13	F
9	Sexual exploitation	11	F
10	Sexual exploitation	6	F
11	Sexual exploitation	9	F
12	Attempted removal of organs	9	F

Perpetuator

No.	*Type of exploitation*	*Verdict*	*Conviction*	*Age*	*Sex*	*Date of conviction*
1	Attempted sale	Human trafficking	Five years	45	F	25th May 2005
2	TIP/Commercial Sexual Exploitation	Human Trafficking	Ten years	37	M	5th July 2007
3	Sexual Exploitation	Unlawful carnal knowledge	Six years	45	M	17 October 2010
4	Attempted sale	Human Trafficking	Seven years	18	F	2009

No	*Type of exploitation*	*Verdict*	*Conviction*	*Age*	*Sex*	*Date of conviction*
5	Nine counts charges including trafficking & exploitation	TIP & other sexual offences	Twenty-two years	36	M	29 October 2010
6	Commercial sex exploitation	Human Trafficking	Four years	53	M	28 May 2010
7	Sexual exploitation and abuse of young girl	Abuse of young girl	Twenty years	51	M	18 May 2010
8	Sexual exploitation	Unlawful carnal knowledge	Fifteen years	46	M	18 May 2010
9	Sexual exploitation	Abuse of young girl	Four years	54	M	2009
10	Sexual exploitation	Indecent assault	Two years	20	M	2009
11	Sexual exploitation	Indecent assault	Seven years	43	M	2009
12	Attempted removal of organs	Human Trafficking	Six years	17	M	17 July 2010

Participation in public and political life

13. **Please provide updated disaggregated data on the number and percentage of women in Parliament, in government, as well as the number of women represented in local councils as mayors/chairpersons and councillors, in ward committees and as Paramount Chiefs. Please also provide updated data on the participation of women in civil service, including in decision-making positions, in the judiciary, as well as in the diplomatic service. In light of the 2009 Chieftaincy Act providing that women are eligible to become Paramount Chiefs "where tradition so specifies", please indicate which measures have been taken or are envisaged to increase the number of women standing as candidates for Paramount Chieftaincy positions, in particular in regions where women are still customarily forbidden to hold such positions. Please indicate if the State party has developed training programmes on leadership skills for current and future women leaders.**

Index of Women's Participation in Governance in 2013

	Index of women's participation in governance in 2013		
	Number of women	*Number of men*	*Percentage of women*
National government (total) 185	23	162	12.4
Executive President	0	1	0
Vice President	0	1	0
Cabinet Ministers	2	25	7.4
Deputy Ministers	5	21	19.2
Ministers of State	1	5	16.7
Legislative Parliamentarians	15	109	12.1
Speaker of Parliament	0	1	0
Deputy Speaker of Parliament	0	1	0
Sessional Committees of Parliament (32)	15	109	12.1
Local government (total) 624	102	522	6.4
Mayors of Local Councils	1	5	16.7
Chairpersons of Local Councils	1	12	7.7
Deputy Mayors of Local Councils	4	2	66.7
Deputy Chairpersons of Local Councils	1	12	7.7
Paramount Chiefs	13	136	8.7
Councillors	87	369	19.1
Total			

Source: National Electoral Commission Report, 2012

Number of women and men in Decision-Making Positions in the Diplomatic Service and NEC

	Number of women	*Number of men*	*Percentage of women*
Diplomatic/Public Service	4	22	15.4
High Commissioners	0	2	0
Ambassadors	3	14	17.6
Deputy High Commissioners	1	2	33.3
Deputy Ambassadors	0	4	0
National Electoral Commission — Chief and Regional Commissioners	3	2	60
Total			

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; National Electoral Commission (NEC)

	Index of women participating in the justice sector in 2013					
	2012			*2013*		
Sector of Judiciary	*No. of women*	*No. of men*	*% of women*	*No. of women*	*No. of men*	*% of women*
Justice of the Peace	3	7	30.0	2	11	15.4
Magistrates	2	18	10.0	2	23	8.0
High Court	3	11	21.4	3	13	18.7
Court of Appeal	3	2	60.0	3	2	60.0
Supreme Court	3	2	60.0	3	2	60.0
Law Courts — Chief Justice	1	0	100.0	1	0	100
Solicitor-General	1	0	100.0	1	0	100
Administrator-General	1	0	100.0	1	0	100
Total	**17**	**40**	**29.8**	**16**	**51**	**23.9**

The number of women in the Judiciary is increasing following the appointment of a woman as Chief Justice. In the Supreme Court, out of five judges, two of them are women i.e. the Chief Justice herself, Umu Hawa Tejan-Jalloh and Virgina Wright, JSC.

In the Court of Appeal, out of six judges, three are women including Justice Vivian E. Solomon, Justice Mrs. Showers and Justice Mrs. Nyawo-Jones.

In the High Court, out of ten judges, four of them are women including Justice Musu Kamara, Justice Dwazark, Justice Nyawo-Jones and Justice V.E. Solomon.

The government has officially launched the Constitutional Review process and issues of chieftaincy will be looked into during the process. In fact it is only six out of the twelve districts where cultural issues poses a challenge to women vying for paramount chieftaincy elections. In fact one of the women appealed in Kailahun District and won the appeal to make her qualified to contest the paramount chieftaincy elections.

Several capacity building for women veering leadership elections were organized prior to the 2012 Presidential, General and Local Councils elections. Organizations like UNWOMEN, Campaign for Good Governance, OSIWA, 50/50 Group, Women's Forum, National Democratic Institute were among those that provided training for women veering for leadership positions. Additionally, the UNWOMEN collaborated with national women's organizations to set up the Women's Situation Room for the monitoring of the entire electioneering process for the 2012 elections.

Nationality

14. **Please indicate if the State party intends to take steps to repeal the remaining discriminatory provisions of the Law on Citizenship which was amended in 2006, and according to which (1) women who give birth outside the State party can transmit their nationality only if their child did not acquire another nationality; (2) women cannot pass their nationality to their spouses of foreign nationality; (3) children who are not of "negro African descent"**

accordingly do not have access to citizenship by birth or naturalization. Please also describe concrete steps taken to improve birth registration in the State party, especially in rural areas, where women give birth to children through the Traditional Birth Attendants.

The Law on Citizenship has been progressively amended from 1973 i.e. The Sierra Leone Citizenship Act, 1973, Act No. 4 of 1973 was amended in 1976 by The Sierra Leone Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1976 Act No. 13 of 1976 and then by The Sierra Leone Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2006 Act No. 10 of 2006.

Progressively, women can now acquire, retain, transmit and renounce citizenship on equal basis as men.

There is also now the opportunity for laws on citizenship to be improved and even made part of the Constitution in the course of the present Constitutional Review Commission's work because the last Constitutional Review Commission recommended that since citizenship is a human (including women's) right issue, such should be put in the Constitution under Fundamental Human Rights.

The women's Civil Society Organisations supported by some development parties particularly UN Women have embarked on research and sensitization to ensure that laws on citizenship are not only improved for both women and men, but the status of such laws be made Constitutional.

Education

15. **Please provide updated and detailed sex-disaggregated data on the enrolment rates at all levels of the education system, including in non-formal, technical and vocational education. Please provide updated information on the implementation of the girl-child support education policy (para. 137) and the Sierra Leone Gender and Education Network (para. 138). In light of the high rate of illiteracy, especially in rural areas and among adult women, please inform the Committee on efforts developed to retain girls in school and to encourage them to complete their education. Please also provide information on the measures taken or envisaged to reduce the high drop-out rates of girls, including in cases of early marriage and pregnancy, as well as to address violence against girls in school and corporal punishments.**

The formal school system comprises of the pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior/tech-voc school levels. However, pre-primary enrolment starts at an average age of three years and continue for a three-year period. Children are normally enrolled at primary level at age six which is sufficient enough to cope with the curriculum of primary education in Sierra Leone. At an average age of 11 years, children are expected to have completed the primary level and enrol into the junior secondary school where they are due to spend another three years before writing the Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE) and graduate to the senior secondary school (SSS) level.

Disaggregated sex data on enrolment for 2011/2012 academic year

Pre-primary

Region	*Male*	*Female*	*Both*
East	3 748	4 290	8 038
North	3 375	3 524	6 899
South	3 250	3 509	6 759
West	13 266	14 044	27 310
National	23 639	25 367	49 006
Girls/Boys ratio			1.07
% at level			3%
Population	293 727	292 733	586 460
Gross enrolment rate	8.0%	8.7%	8.4%

Primary

Region	*Male*	*Female*	*Both*
East	146 980	147 281	294 261
North	232 389	216 025	448 414
South	142 673	145 492	288 165
West	106 287	115 227	221 514
National	628 329	624 025	1 252 354
Girls/Boys ratio			0.99
% at level			74%
Population	500 598	505 990	1 006 587
Gross enrolment rate	125.5%	123.3%	124.4%

Junior secondary school

Region	*Male*	*Female*	*Both*
East	28 963	27 692	56 655
North	50 677	39 322	89 999
South	25 255	21 962	47 217
West	39 279	42 765	82 044
National	144 174	131 741	275 915
Girls/Boys ratio			0.91
% at level			16%
Population	203 135	207 327	410 462
Gross enrolment rate	71.0%	63.5%	67.2%

Senior secondary school

Region	*Male*	*Female*	*Both*
East	12 044	7 659	19 703
North	19 062	10 343	29 405
South	10 571	5 998	16 569
West	29 559	29 649	59 208
National	71 236	53 649	124 885
Girls/Boys ratio			0.75
% at level			7%
Population	175 407	179 842	355 249
Gross enrolment rate	40.6%	29.8%	35.2%

The planning and Policy Directorate of the MEST in collaboration with UNICEF and other development partners, conduct a yearly school census to determine the existing figures on enrolment among others, in the various school levels together with available infrastructures and facilities in all schools countrywide.

Enrolment rates in the non-formal education

The Non-Formal Education Directorate of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has established twenty-one (21) community learning centres in ten (10) districts including Bombali, Tonkolili, Kambia, Koinadugu, Kono, Kenema, Bo, Bonthe, Pujehun and Moyamba and government provides subvention to the NGOs and Institutions providing or complementing non-formal education. These partners include: Sierra Leone Adult Education Association; Peoples' Educational Association Sierra Leone; Partners in Women's Commission; the Institute of Sierra Leonean Languages; Partners in Adult Education Coordinating Office; Teach for Humanity; Kamuyu Community Learning Centre; Women's Empowerment Learning Centre; and Collective Campaign for Development.

Peoples' Educational Association (PEA)

Location	*No. of centres*	*Enrolment*		
		Male	*Female*	*Total*
Western Area	5	391	411	802
Kambia District	2	87	77	164
Tonkolili District	1	38	29	67
Bo District	10	280	186	466
Bombali District	3	96	59	155
Koinadugu District	2	47	26	73
Kenema District	3	106	70	176
Total	**26**	**1 045**	**858**	**1 903**

Sierra Leone Adult Education Association (SLADEA)

		Enrolment		
Location	*No. of centres*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Freetown	2	60	60	120
Waterloo	1	20	15	35
Port Loko	3	60	15	75
Magburaka	4	44	71	115
Makeni	3	43	32	75
Kabala		20	85	105
Bo	5	18	82	100
Kenema	3	15	60	75
Pujehun	3	15	35	50
Mattru Jong	2	20	30	50
Bonthe	3	10	65	75
Mile 91	3	20	55	75
Moyamba		19	31	50
Total	**60**	**364**	**636**	**1 000**

Partners in Women's Commission

		Enrolment		
Location	*No. of centres*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Mayenkeneh	3	20	60	80
Mamboma Goderich	3	53	32	85
Goal Shelter Kanikay	3	20	35	55
Total	**9**	**93**	**127**	**220**

The Institute of Sierra Leonean Languages (TISIL)

		Enrolment		
Location	*No. of centres*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
TISIL Krio literacy	18	172	72	244
Themne literacy	14	148	56	204
Limba literacy	20	170	80	250
Kono literacy	12	86	60	146
Mende literacy	3	26	6	32
Kissi literacy	9	112	36	148
Loko literacy	15	135	45	180
Total	**91**	**849**	**355**	**12 204**

Teach for Humanity

		Enrolment		
Location	*No. of centres*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Makeni city		10	30	40
		15	30	45
	3	10	18	38
Total	**3**	**25**	**78**	**123**

Women's Empowerment

		Enrolment		
Location	*No. of centres*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Bo		–	10	10
		–	11	11
	3	–	16	16
Total	**3**	**–**	**37**	**37**

Collective Campaign for Development

		Enrolment		
Location	*No. of centres*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Bo		5	10	15
		1	17	18
	3	5	12	17
Total	**3**	**11**	**39**	**50**

Women's World International

		Enrolment		
Location	*No. of centres*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Goderich, Freetown	3	–	15	15
		5	20	25
		–	7	7
Total	**3**	**5**	**42**	**47**

Enrolment rates in the technical and vocational education system

The Technical-Vocational Institutes were set up to accommodate students whose career interests are focused in the area of this discipline or whose performances in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) were not

satisfactory to pursue main career disciplines. A recent investigation indicates that there are 370 registered Tech-Voc Institutions in the country.

Regional Analysis of Tech-Voc Institutes on salary and grants combined

	Students' enrolment			*Teachers' enrolment*			
Region	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Total no. of schools*
West	4 284	9 552	13 839	495	296	791	71
North	1 772	1 542	3 314	218	74	292	24
South	2 440	3 757	6 197	227	176	403	37
East	1 352	2 407	3 759	167	65	232	23
National	9 848	17 258	27 109	1 107	611	1 718	155

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in collaboration with UNICEF and Civil Society Organizations organized a two day workshop that culminated in the establishment of the Sierra Leone Girls' Network (SLeGEN). The vision of the SLeGEN is to promote girls access, retention and completion in school as well as empower women who were marginalised for bulk of the non-literate population. The Ministry in further established the Gender Unit in December 1999 to promote girls' education, women's empowerment and gender equity in Sierra Leone, together with addressing gender imbalance in education and to strengthen the human capital and capacity of relevant institutions for gender mainstreaming.

Considering the high rate of literacy in the rural areas among girls and women, SLeGEN has collaborated with partners including MEST, FAWE and others have organized community dialogue forum with stakeholders to educate and sensitize communities on the urgent need to support children to access, stay and complete schooling in their respective communities.

SLeGEN has engaged Bike Riders and other transport agents on the mobilization and sensitization campaign in the rural communities on the social vices that impede girl child education. The network has facilitated child support programme and the award of scholarship for the girl child with proficient performance in the sciences at the senior school level. Government of Sierra Leone pays the school fees for every child enrolled at the primary level and further promotes girls education through activities that will attract the interests of the girls/women in the rural areas.

SLeGEN is currently collaborating with MEST and UNICEF for sensitization through school talks, community dialogue and radio discussions to curb high rate of drop out especially among girls and women through early marriages and teenage pregnancies. Additionally mothers' clubs has been established where girl mothers and communities are engaged in small scale business to help vulnerable girls to stay in school and supporting their educational needs.

SLeGEN similarly complements governments' effort through public education on gender sensitive laws including the Child Rights Act, Domestic Violence Act, Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, Sexual Offences Act and the Anti-Human Trafficking Act among others.

Employment

16. **Please indicate the status of the Draft Employment Bill and whether it includes the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, as well as a definition and prohibition of sexual harassment in the work place. Please indicate if progress was made towards undertaking the nationwide labour survey and developing a corresponding policy, as referred to in paragraph 146 of the State party's report. As recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5, 2007, para. 33), please provide information on the protection and the types of legal, social or other services available to, or envisaged for women in the informal sector, as well as measures taken to ensure their integration into the formal labour force. Please also indicate whether labour inspections have been established to monitor the working conditions of women and girls engaged in the mining and agricultural sector, as well as in "petty" trading and as domestic workers, in order to avoid exploitative labour.**

Health

17. **Please inform the Committee on the progress in the implementation of the Health Sector Strategic Pian (2010-2015), in particular on measures taken (a) to reduce the incidence of maternal and infant mortality rates; (b) to improve women's access to prenatal and postnatal care; (c) to increase the number of trained health-care personnel; (d) to address the prevalence of fistula; (e) to raise women and girls' awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights and (f) to enhance the use and availability of contraceptives and family planning information, particularly in rural areas. Please also indicate which modalities have been put in place to meet the increased demand in clinic attendance since the 2010 declaration of free services to all pregnant and lactating women, as well as children under five (para. 172). Further, referring to paragraph 178 of the report on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, please indicate if the State party has taken steps to address the feminization of HIV/AIDS and reduce women's vulnerability to this disease, particularly in rural areas.**

His Excellency the President of Sierra Leone, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma in his vision to improve the health of woman and children in Sierra Leone, declared during the launching of the Health Sector Strategic Plan, his ambition of improving the lives of women and children. The National Health Strategic Plan (2010-2015) provides a common strategic framework that guides all interventions by partners at all levels of the national health system.

Progress in the implementation of the Plan are as follows:

Reduction of incidence of maternal and infant death

Maternal and child health are priorities to the Government that led to the introduction of the Free Health Care Initiative which commenced implementation in April 2010 when cost was identified as a barrier to access for care. The Initiative targeted pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under 5 years old with **Free** health care at service delivery points. Free Health Care has increased service utilization by the number of the target population by more than 100 per cent with the first year.

Increasing access to prenatal and postnatal care

Good quality ANC is important for women to be awareness of possible danger signs, access preventive services and for early detection of complications. In Sierra Leone, it is recommended that pregnant women must make four antenatal visits from the first trimester through term. These visits are generally adequate to monitor the progress of pregnancy to detect and manage any complications at the appropriate stages of pregnancy. Postnatal, is the period just after delivery. It is important that a lactating mother attend postnatal care at a health facility to ensure that she is healthy and capable of taking care of her newborn, and that she is equipped with all the information she needs about breastfeeding, reproductive health and contraception. There were remarkable increases in all ANC and PNC consultations after the initiation of the FHC Policy, in April 2010. In 2010, about 55 per cent of all lactating mothers sought postnatal care at a health facility, seven days after delivery, and only 38 per cent sought postnatal care six weeks after delivery.

Increase the number of trained medical personnel

Using a multiple prong approach as trained medical personnel directly affect maternal and newborn mortality, the Government of Sierra Leone with support from partners has implemented the following strategies to increase the number of trained health personnel in country:

- Establishment of a second midwifery school;
- Accelerated recruited of health staff, 1,000 and 1,500 in 2010 and 2012; increase the salaries an incentive to promote retention of staff including performance-based financing;
- Supported the recruitment of retired midwives;
- Nearly finalizing the training and establishment of clinical assistants to perform minor surgery as a task shifting mechanism;
- Postgraduate specialist training of young doctors;
- In-service training of health-care providers which includes family planning, mentoring and supportive supervision, adolescent health, nutrition etc.

Incidence of fistula

Developed, launched and disseminate obstetric fistula strategic plan. Ongoing advocacy and referral to treatment and rehabilitation sites with the support of partners.

Awareness raising women's and girls' of sexual and reproductive health and rights

Community advocacy groups established at chiefdom level with the main goal of increasing the knowledge and empowerment of women and girls to make appropriate decisions and choices based on their knowledge. This is complemented by the Office of the First Lady whose key role is in the area of advocacy utilizing traditional and religious leaders.

Enhancing the use and availability of contraception and family planning information

To enhance the use and availability of contraception and family planning, capacity-building is ongoing (including Master Trainers and facilitators), development and use of family planning manual and curricula to standardize training national. In addition, the availability and monitoring of commodities is done via a commodity security committee made up of varied key stakeholders. Monitoring of availability and stock out is done in collaboration with the central medical stores using the CHANEL and LMIS systems. Annual surveys are also done to monitor commodities. To reach hard to reach communities, government and partners have initiated outreach services but the main challenge is scaling up these key interventions.

Modalities put in place to meet the increase demand in clinic attendance since the declaration of the Free Health Care Initiative

The following modalities have being put in place to meet the increasing demand of clients in the service delivery points:

- Construction and rehabilitation of more health facilities;
- Provision of free drugs, equipment and laboratory reagents for targeted groups in the Free Health Care Package;
- Establishment of performance-based financing;
- Training and recruitment of more staff including retired midwives and medical consultants;
- Establishment of additional health training institutions such as the second midwifery school and the paramedical school.

Addressing the issues of feminization of HIV/AIDS

To address the needs of feminization of HIV/AIDS, the following were done which collectively has reduced the transmission of mother to child transmission to almost 5 per cent:

- Amendment of the National HIV and AIDS prevention and control Act of 2007 which states that there is a crime of offence for women to give births to an HIV child. In Section 12 and 21 this has been change to read "that women have done no wrong in delivering an HIV baby";
- Treatment sites for HIV have increased from 16 to 700 centres;
- Initial treatment protocol just involves the treatment of babies, now change from commencement of treatment from pregnancy and delivery;
- Encouragement and support of the establishment of the Voice of HIV women across the country;
- HIV treatment was Free even before the Free Health Care Initiative.

Economic empowerment of women

The report indicates that there are very limited economic and social services targeting women in the informal sector (para. 179). Please provide information on concrete efforts undertaken by the State party to assist the large percentage of women in the informal sector, such as women engaged in "petty" trading, in establishing sustainable enterprises. Please provide information on the extent to which the national microfinance policy addresses the vulnerable situation of women in the informal sector, the majority of whom have to resort to informal savings scheme or "Osusu's"? Please also inform the Committee on the progress in the establishment of the National Coordinating and Supervisory framework for ensuring data collection and guaranteed savings and loan schemes (para. 187).

The National Commission for Social Action is the Government of Sierra Leone's Agency, established to lead the country's poverty alleviation initiative. NaCSA's involvement in assisting women in the informal sector has come a long way, but in recent times, under the Sierra Leone Community Driven Development Project (SLCDD) funded by the GoSL and Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Commission is piloting 118 Self Help Affinity Groups throughout the country.

These are poor women formed voluntarily into groups of 15 to 20 members who are homogenous (same location, business, nature, etc. and close relation (affinity)).

They could be described as local informal democratic institutions with the core objective of self empowerment through training in leadership, savings, importance of meetings, responsibility sharing, banking, income generation activities, record keeping, community mobilization and sensitization.

As at end of November 2013, these groups have over Le 180 million in their various Bank accounts across the country from their individual weekly savings since their formation in May 2012. These groups meet weekly and leadership is on a rotational basis, and the two permanent "Representatives" who we normally referred to as Chairladies are replaced at the end of every year. Decisions in these groups are on consensus basis.

The groups are engaged in internal lending from the savings at an agreed interest rate, and repayment is 100 per cent. The groups' fund was further boosted with grant from NaCSA of US $93,000 from ranging from US $1,500, US $1,000, US $500 and US $0.00 per group based on performance, through assessments carried out, a roll-out training plan is now underway to embark on livelihood activities especially backyard gardening.

Another group of women is supported under the youth micro-, Small and Medium Enterprise Development programme which has targeted 32 groups especially women with business interest and marketable talents. They are organized into Micro-Enterprise Groups (MEGs) of 20 members and empowered through appropriate resources which is:

- Financial Literacy and Business Development training.
- Technical assistance grant financing.

- Accessing loan with concessionary interest rate of 20 per cent to support micro-enterprise growth (a profit margin is necessary to ensure growth in the revolving fund for other women to benefit from the scheme.
- Loan amount allocated on a revolving basis for a maturity period of 6 months-1 year.
- Grace period of 2 months is given depending on the approved amount and nature of business.

The extent to which the National Micro-Finance Policy addresses the vulnerable situation of women

The Government of Sierra Leone considers microfinance as an integral element of the broader financial sector. The policy is guided by a vision of achieving widespread access to microfinance throughout the country which is made possible by institutions operating on commercial principles. Some providers focus on credit, some on savings and others on both and the objective is to increase outreach and to enable an expansion of service offered to the poor. This was intended to bring financial services to the door step of the pro-poor.

However, the policy does not address the issue of non-exploitative interest rates for especially women in the informal sector. This, from all indication, limits women's access to microfinance coupled with the terms and conditions of the financial institutions.

Therefore, majority of these women have resorted to regular savings like in the case of the Self-Help Affinity Groups (SAGs), which can help them improve the way they manage their money, and when appropriate, can provide small loans on flexible and competitive terms without requiring collateral, to meet emergency needs for investment in small enterprises or farming.

Majority of the members of the SAG are smallholder farmers who need secure and stable access to productive resources as well as access to inputs and appropriate financial services in order to invest in and improve their production systems. They also need appropriate extension services, training, improved seeds, technologies and access to appropriate marketing facilities. This need is particularly acute for every marginalized and excluded communities.

The table below shows that women in the informal sector are benefiting from loans provided by microfinance institutions.

Breakdown of Coverage of Micro-Finance clients by Gender and District

	MFI Clients		
District	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
Western Area	16 414	3 475	29 999
Bo	7 065	1 766	8 831
Bonthe	311	104	415
Moyamba	2 262	570	2 823
Pujehun	947	237	1 184
Kenema	3 650	644	4 294
Kono	2 671	1 145	3 816
Kailahun	1 542	385	1 927
Bombali	7 320	737	8 057
Koinadugu	1 360	240	1 600
Tonkolili	2 780	738	3 158
Portloko	4 582	1 147	5 729

Compiled by statistics presented by MFIs in July 2012 as cited in Agenda for Prosperity.

Rural women

19. **Please inform the Committee on the status of the new draft land policy, on its content with regard to women's access to and management of land in rural areas and provide a timeframe for its adoption. Please provide information on any strategy or programme carried out by the State party to improve the situation of rural women and girls, including their access to health, education, employment, credit and their participation in decision-making. Please also provide information on the impact of the second Poverty Reduction Strategy on the social inclusion of rural women, and on their access to sanitation, housing, water, electricity, transportation and communication and indicate if any educational programmes, including programmes in areas of functional literacy, enterprise development, skills training and microfinance, have been undertaken or are envisaged in the third Strategy being developed, as means of poverty alleviation.**

The land policy is still under review. The second Poverty Reduction Strategy commonly dubbed as the Agenda for Change made provision for rural women in terms of social inclusion. The government of Sierra Leone supported "Barefoot Women" who were illiterate rural women and facilitated their travel to India to learn within a period of six months as solar engineers. These women successfully completed their course and are now undertaking rural electrification. The Barefoot Women Solar College has provided opportunity for young university graduates to be taught hands on training by the "Barefoot women" in solar energy at the college. Issues relating to education, health and microfinance information provided above encompasses the rural and urban areas in the country. In fact the third generation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy dubbed as the Agenda for Prosperity has a robust mechanism to support rural women in the areas of social protection and the empowerment of women in the country.

Marriage and family relations

20. **Please inform the Committee on the current status and content of the Matrimonial Causes Bill (para. 240), which has been pending since 2005, including on the custody of children and financial support to spouse and children in case of divorce or separation, and provide a timeframe for its adoption. Please also indicate if relevant officers in local councils, particularly in rural areas, have received systematic training on the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, as well as on the Devolution of Estates Act. Please also clarify the status of polygamous marriages concluded prior to the entry into force of the Registration of Customary Marriage Act. Please describe the measures taken to ensure the strict enforcement of the Devolution of Estates Act. Further, given that the Act does not apply to family property, chieftaincy property or community property held under customary law (article 1, section 3), please indicate how the State party is addressing the prevalent customary practices which still preclude women from inheriting or owning property and land in rural areas where property is governed by customary law.**

The Matrimonial Causes Bill (2005) is still pending and is part of the Ministry's strategic plan for the 2014 budget. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and its partners are also looking at the current Constitutional Review process to see what can be effected in the Constitutional reform whilst looking at reviewing the Matrimonial Causes Bill to address contemporary matrimonial causes issues in Sierra Leone.

The Ministry with support from our Development Partners have conducted series of training for Local Council Authorities on the three "Gender Justice Laws" namely the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act; Domestic Violence Act; and the Devolution of Estates Act.

The Matrimonial Causes Bill is still a Bill and is only being discussed by the Civil Society and relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

The Bill was discovered to be limited in scope in that it did not cover fully marriage and family relations under customary law which affect rural women.

It was proposed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and the UNDP for a research to be undertaken in marriage and family relations under customary law and the findings incorporated in to the Bill. One major challenge has been want of financial resources to fund the proposed research.

There no specific training as yet on the Matrimonial Causes Bill because of lack of funds. As far as women inheriting property under customary law is concerned, the Superior Courts which serve as Appellate Courts handle such matter judicially and apply the general law on human rights and equity.